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ABSTRACT

This booklet is a guide for teachers, administrators, curriculum planners, and educational consultants responsible for improving the quality of middle school physical education programs. Areas covered include: (1) the middle school and its clientele; (2) physical activity programs; (3) the teacher; (4) organization and administration; and (5) evaluation. (JD)

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Guidelines for Middle School Physical Education

a position paper
revised 1986

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INTRODUCTION

The Elementary School Physical Education Council and Secondary School Physical Education Council of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, an association of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation appointed a committee in 1971 to study the status of physical education programs in the newly emerging middle schools. Their first report appeared in the *Journal of Physical Education and Recreation,* November-December, 1972. Following that, a major feature on physical education for middle school children appeared in the *Journal*, February, 1974.

An additional charge to the Committee on Middle Schools was to develop a position paper on future directions in physical education, to serve as a guide for teachers, administrators, curriculum planners and educational consultants. The committee, with representatives from all levels of education and administration, investigated present practices, surveyed the literature and developed a series of statements that were evaluated by a cross section of teachers throughout the nation. The document was reviewed by physical education teachers at three National Conventions, by the Elementary and Secondary Physical Education Councils and several classroom teachers and principals.

In 1985, the Secondary School Physical Education Council in conjunction with the Council on Physical Education for Children undertook the task of revising these guidelines. Appreciation is extended to the writers, editors, and revisors of the original and the revised editions for their time, efforts, and expertise. It is believed that implementation of the following guidelines should result in sound and defensible physical education programs in the middle schools.

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL AND ITS CLIENTELE

[redacted] separate school unit evolved in the early part of the twentieth century for the primary purpose of providing a smooth transition between the elementary school and the high school, the two previously established levels of education. It was no coincidence that this school level encompassed the circumpubertal growth phase of most youngsters. The current concept of the middle school began in the late 1950's and emerged as a popular alternative to the junior high school. The rationale supporting the middle school philosophy is based on a concern for the special needs and interests of the transescent[1] student and the failure of the junior high school to meet the needs of children of this age[2].

Program Characteristics

The program in this separate school unit was designed to provide variations in instructional patterns to meet the varying learning styles and rates of transescent youth. Alexander[3] indicated that the middle school program should be characterized by:

1. A home base and teacher for every student, to provide the continuing guidance and assistance to help students make the decisions they face almost daily regarding special needs and learning opportunities.

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[1]Eichhorn, Donald, *The Middle School*, The Center for Applied Reseach in Education, Inc., New York, 1966, p. 3.

[2]*Organization of the Middle Grades: A Summary of Research.* Educational Research Service, 1984. (A copy of this publication may be obtained from the Educational Research Service, 1800 North Kent Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209, (703) 243-2100).

[3]Alexander, William M., "How Fares the Middle School?" *National Elementary Principal*, 51:8-11: November, 1971.

2. A program of learning opportunities offering balanced attention to three major goals of the middle school: (a) personal development of the between-ager, (b) skills of continued learning, and (c) effective use of appropriate knowledge.
3. An instructional system focused on individual progress, with many curricular options and with individualized instruction in appropriate areas.
4. The use of interdisciplinary team arrangements for cooperative planning, instructing and evaluating.
5. A wide range of exploratory activities for the socializing, interest-developing, and leisure-enriching purposes of the middle school.

Characteristics of Transescent Youth

It is difficult to describe or categorize the clientele of the middle school in a single concise statement. This period of transition is one of stresses and strains, of upheaval in the emotional, social, intellectual, and physical worlds. This is a period of great physical change, of uneven growth, of wide variations among children in height, weight, and physical maturity. Transescent youth:

- are in the process of taking a critical look at themselves and are beginning to establish values and seek direction in their lives.
- are ready for new ideas and experiences.
- are quick to explore concepts, but are more difficult to teach as they are less willing to remain in the role of the learner.

- are more impatient with their teachers than students in the elementary school.
- seek independence and are quite ready to accept responsibility at their level of maturity.
- have a great desire to gain the approval of their peers, which many times is more important than adult approval.
- are at times quite self-centered and selfish although their emotional lives are predominated by idealism.

The above characteristics, though not unique to the transescent youth, tend to be more pronounced in children of the middle school. Regardless of their ability level, educational situations should be structured to meet their specific needs. We believe that physical education in the middle school can help students develop an understanding of their changing bodies and personalities and how these changes affect their relationships with others.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS

Physical activity programs include all of the knowledges and experiences that the school provides for the purpose of enhancing the motor, intellectual, social and physical development of individuals through the means of body movement. It has been long recognized that middle school students need quality physical experiences on a regular basis. The unique contribution of movement to the development of youth indicates that the middle school curriculum should provide for systematic instruction in a wide variety of activities. These offerings should include activities and concepts in the areas of conditioning and physical fitness, individual and dual sports, team sports, gymnastics, rhythms and dance, track and field, aquatics, and outdoor activities[4].

These physical education experiences must be planned and implemented in ways that will maximize the potential contribution to the overall goals of education. Basic concepts in physical education should be identified and integrated through a wide variety of activities[5]. Therefore, we believe that middle school physical activity programs should:

- be under the direct supervision and control of certified physical education instructors.
- provide appropriate physical education activities for all students regardless of their level of physical development.
- have a written philosophy and program goals that are consistent with the educational goals of the school system and reflective of the needs of middle school students.
- represent a transitional progression from the elementary program to the high school program by providing the opportunity to participate in

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[4]Tenoschok, Mike, "Physical Education: A Basic," *Middle School Journal*, November, 1984, pp. 26-27.

[5]American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, *Basic Stuff* series, 1981.

short exploratory units as well as longer units of instruction, that are clear, concise, measurable and understood by the students.

- have specific instructional objectives for each activity.
- have each activity developed on a continuum so that students can progress on an individual basis throughout the middle school years.
- provide ways for pupils to develop, change, and test perceptions of self in a physical and social setting.
- guarantee ample opportunities for the remediation or "repair" of motor skills and fitness levels for those students who have not progressed as rapidly as their peer group.
- provide experiences that would promote motor skill development and fitness throughout life.
- avoid sex role discrimination and sex stereotyping by grouping students according to interest and ability levels.
- provide opportunities for individual students to accept added responsibilities and to be more self-directing in the selection of and performance in activities.
- reflect a multi-media, multi-space approach with opportunities for individual learning and skill acquisition and fitness development.
- provide for interaction and coordination with other disciplines in the school curriculum[6].

Physical activity experiences beyond the instructional program are an integral part of the total activities program. These experiences should include intramural activities, specialized club activities, periodically scheduled mini-courses and open recreation periods.

After the instructional program, the intramural program should receive the highest priority. A well-organized intramural program[7] is a valuable extension of the instructional program. The in-

[6]For example of this point, see Bird, James, "Disseminational Spheres of Curriculum Implementation," *Gymnasium,* Volume IX, Issue 3, Fall, 1972, pp. 10-13, and Eichhorn, Donald, pp. 68-71.

[7]Tenoschok, Mike, "Intramurals, Above and Beyond . . ." *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance,* Sept. 1981, pp. 32-33.

tramural program should offer a broad range of physical activities to supplement and complement those offered in the regular physical education program. The purposes of the intramural program should be to:

- serve as a laboratory for additional practice, self-testing and for specialization in activities learned in the instructional program.
- allow time for further instruction and the introduction of unique activities.
- present a setting for game play or low-key competition.

The effective intramural program should:

- allow for unequal rates of development in participants and equalize teams according to age, weight or grade.
- provide for separate and coeducational activities.
- provide equal opportunities for all participants.
- nurture a healthy spirit of competition, sportsmanship and teamwork.
- provide the opportunity to participate in activities for the sake of participation, enjoyment and fun without external pressure.

The question of interschool sport competition[8] is one of the most controversial issues associated with the middle school movement. Interscholastic sports, because of their highly competitive nature, can prove to be detrimental both physically and psychologically to many developing middle school students.

The negative aspects of interscholastic sports at the middle school level seem to outweigh any potential benefits. Many of these benefits can be gained through well-designed intramural programs. Intramurals, unlike interscholastic sports which only serve the highly talented, provide for the needs, wants and interests of all students.

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[8]See discussion on this point in McEwin, C. Kenneth, "Physical Education and Sports in the Middle School," in *The Middle School Primer*, Editors Alfred A. Arth and John H. Lounsbury, 1981. (Copies of *The Middle School Primer* are available from the University of Wyoming Bookstore, Laramie, Wyoming 82071 for $5.00.)

TEACHER

Preparation of teachers should include courses and teaching experiences that pertain to the education of middle school students. In-service education opportunities for all personnel concerned with physical activity programs for the middle school learner should be a continuing responsibility of school districts, colleges and universities. The in-service education program for physical education teachers is imperative to assure skilled and knowledgeable teachers to administer the varied program required for middle schools.

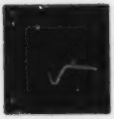
Administrative support is necessary to encourage and to provide opportunities to attend workshops, meetings, and conventions which keep physical education personnel current on materials and information.

Educational programs should prepare teachers who:

- understand the physical, social, mental and emotional characteristics that are unique to transescent youth.
- possess a positive self-concept and demonstrate respect for the dignity and worth of all individuals.
- have sufficient knowledge in the areas of developmental physiology, physical growth, and motor performance to work with students on a one-to one basis in planning and implementing programs.

- can direct students to appropriate sources of information to enhance the learning opportunities presented in the physical activity program.
- are generalists familiar with a wide variety of skills and activities in order to implement the exploratory qualities of the program.
- have a background in various teaching styles and be able to modify rules, equipment and instructional stations to conform to the needs of the learner.
- continually strive to increase their knowledge and understanding necessary to meet the changing needs of transescents and their learning environment.
- can interact with students and fellow teachers in a way that is supportive of the special needs of the middle school student.
- will assume leadership in providing for the expanded physical activity experiences for all students in the school.
- are able to interpret the goals and objectives of the activity programs to students and their parents.
- consider the developmental and skill level of the student as well as the nature of the activity as criteria for planning instructional strategies.
- are able to maintain and manage record-keeping systems which can be utilized in planning or progressive instruction.
- have an understanding of the middle school concept.
- possess teaching certification in physical education.

ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION



rganizational and administrative policies should provide a framework that encourages and facilitates the smooth and effective operation of a physical activity program[9].

Toward this end the organizational and administrative services should:

- provide sufficient indoor and outdoor facilities, equipment, and supplies to insure meaningful learning experiences for transescents in all phases of a comprehensive middle school physical education program[10].
- provides for adequate record keeping systems to track student continuous progress toward specific goals and objectives.
- budget capital funds for facility construction as well as for the purchase and maintenance of supplies and equipment for the instructional and intramural programs.
- provide flexibility in time patterns, to insure that programs can effectively meet the activity needs dictated by large group, small group, and individual learning experiences.
- schedule students in some combination of at least 250 minutes of physical education per week, distributed over three or more days,[11] preferably daily.

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[9]Seiter, Margaret M., *Shaping the Body Politic*, 1983. American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance.

[10]Refer to guidelines for facilities and teaching stations in the Athletic Institute and the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance, *Planning Facilities for Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation*, revised edition, 1985.

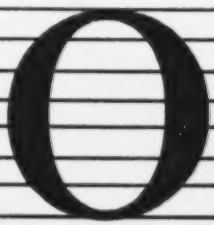
[11]Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, *A Statement of Basic Beliefs About the School Programs in Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, 1985. (For copies of this publication, contact: Simon McNeely, Treasurer, SSDHPER, 9805 Hillridge Drive, Kensington, MD 20895, $2.00 ea.).

- the student/teacher ratio in physical education classes should be the same as in other classes. This is necessary for reasons which include: the health and safety of the students, adequate instruction time for each student, and the opportunity to provide remedial and advanced skill instruction.
- allow for the optimum use of personnel through daily team planning, differentiated staffing, and community resource persons.
- insure the optimum and fair use of facilities through implementation of a system of priorities:

1. The instructional physical education program, including time for mini-courses and individual prescriptive programs such as open laboratory sessions.

2. The intramural and recreation program, to include club activities.

- allow for time within the school day to organize and prepare for an effective intramural program.
- allow for use of community resources such as bowling centers and golf courses as an extension to physical education facilities.



EVALUATION

Continuous evaluation of an educational program is essential in order to insure that the curriculum reflects the changing philosophies of education and the changing needs of students. The total program of activities should be continuously and systematically evaluated to determine if it is meeting the needs of middle school students. Since developmental needs change from year to year and class to class, program evaluation procedures should involve:

- assessment of student outcomes in relation to written program objectives by use of motor skill and fitness testing and cognitive and affective measures.
- input from the students and parents, both verbally and in written form, concerning the effectiveness of the program. This should include opportunity for students and parents to recommend changes in program offerings.
- input by the physical education staff, using the most current evalution instruments available.
- evaluation by parent groups, school administrations, state and national accreditation agencies.
- determination of teacher effectiveness by students, administrators, peers, and by teacher self-evaluation.

There should also be an evaluation of student progress to determine whether individual movement goals are being met. The procedure through which this evalution is conducted should be constructive and provide positive reinforcement in the areas of motor skill and fitness acquisition as well as social, emotional and intellectual development through a systematic appraisal plan. A plan for this purpose should be specific as to skills and fitness components mastered and areas that are in need of improvement.

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